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SUBJECT: MFA ASKS HOW CAN WE AID GAZA WITHOUT INVOLVING
HAMAS?

REF: STATE 14575

1. (SBU) We delivered reftel demarche on February 25 to MFA Counselor for Israel and Palestine Aleksandr Rudokov, who said that Russia recognized the importance of the March 2 conference in Sharm al-Sheikh to address the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people, but previous commitments could prevent FM Lavrov from attending. Lavrov is presently scheduled to accompany Medvedev to Italy on March 1 and Spain on March 2, although the MFA hoped that he could make it to Sharm al-Sheikh in time to participate in the conference. (Note: MFA North America Department Director Neverov told the DCM on February 25 that he believed Lavrov would go to Sharm.) Rudokov could not say what Russia would contribute to Palestinian reconstruction, which could be in the form of a combined financial and in-kind contribution.

2. (SBU) Rudokov responded to the U.S. intention to address the humanitarian needs of Gaza through the Palestinian Authority and UN, while isolating Hamas, by asking how it would be possible to deliver aid to Gaza and reconstruct badly damaged infrastructure and housing without Hamas involvement. The PA did not have the ability to deliver aid to Gaza, and even the UN could not work there without dealing with Hamas, he maintained. Rudokov could not say whether the GOR would press this point during the March 2 conference, but reminded us that Russia did not consider it prudent to isolate Hamas, which needed to reconcile with the PA and be part of a meaningful peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.
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